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State Conservationist Makes Progress Report For New Districts and Additions

In the 29 soil conservation districts in operation in South Dakota the land area is 7,517,743 acres. The last two districts organized were in Turner and Beadle Counties. A referendum was held May 26 on a proposed district of 438,666 acres in Haakon County and a referendum on a proposed addition of approximately 350,000 acres to the Gregory district was held the same day. Hearings have been held on additions by petition to the Lincoln and Pennington districts. During the forepart of June the State Committee will meet and take action on the proposed new Haakon district and all other additions.

Requests have been made to the State Committee for petitions to add territory to soil conservation districts in the following counties: Minnehaha, Clay, Hand, Brule, Lyman, Meade, and Butte counties. A temporary committee is working on a proposed district in Jerauld County. This district will include the entire county.

Recently Frank Eichelman, supervisor in the Tri-County district at Faith, moved to Illinois, and Joe Hlvaka of Plainview was appointed to succeed him. Three supervisors have passed away during their term of office since districts were started. They were C. E. Jonas, Faith, Tom Dunn, Woonsocket, and Eric Erickson, Alcester.

Two supervisors are now in the armed forces—Paul Rasmussen, Fairburn, and Joe Sterak, Scotland.

Over 5,000 farmers have conservation plans developed on their farms and are adopting or enlarging practices as a part of their cooperative farm plans with districts. The objective of these plans is to eventually have maximum conservation of soil and moisture resources on every acre of land on the farm, and the land put to its maximum practical use.

This year there has been an increase in requests of farmers for assistance from districts in helping to establish conservation practices, not only to help conserve soil and moisture resources, but also because experience in the past has indicated many conservation practices help to increase yields of basic crops, needed in the war effort.

A. L. Ford--Ass't State Conservationist

An announcement was made May 17 that A. L. Ford was appointed Assistant State Conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service in South Dakota. Mr. Ford has been forestry specialist for the SCS in South Dakota since last July, and prior to that was director of the shelter belt program in the state which was transferred to SCS last July 1.

Contour Benefits Increase Each Year

"The longer you farm on the contour the better results you get," stated Tom Dempster, cooperator in the Emanuel-Choteau Creek soil conservation district. For the last four years Mr. Dempster has had excellent results from his contour operations. His corn field yielded 69 bushels per acre in 1942. "This is about a 10-bushel increase in yield this year over up-and-down hill farming," continued Dempster when he was recently questioned.

Even before the district was organized he was farming across the slope in an attempt to halt run-off water and erosion. He has also developed his own damming attachment to put small check dams in the lister furrows.

Dempster has a complete farm plan developed which includes the control of a large gully. This gully in the past years has caused considerable trouble and expense to the county highway. It is now well controlled with a timber crib structure.

Crested Wheatgrass Pasture Satisfactory

Thirteen acres of crested wheatgrass pastured 60 ewes and their 80 lambs for Leonard Meyer of Avon. In addition to the pasture he combined over 1000 pounds of seed. This acreage was seeded in the spring of 1941 at the rate of 15 pounds per acre. Mr. Meyer states that this rate of seeding was too heavy but that he really got a good stand.

He is so well-pleased with the performance of crested wheatgrass that he has now seeded 77 acres more on this farm and 30 acres on another place which he owns.

Contour Farming Sells Itself In Minnehaha

After seeing land farmed on the contour on a neighboring farm, which was an extension demonstration, Charles and Paul Sear in Minnehaha county decided to try it themselves in 1942. The first year they had some guide lines run on their farm by an inexperienced person and they were not on the true level.

"Contour farming is a fine thing if you will farm it on the contour, but approximate contour farming is no better than farming up-and-down hill," stated Sear. He continued, "If we are going to farm on the contour; let's farm on the level and be sure it is the true contour."

The Minnehaha district laid out 65 acres on the contour for his 1942 corn planting. An additional 90 acres will be farmed on the level this year. He plans to eliminate the short rows and irregular areas by rearranging fences and field boundaries on the contour and by grass seedings.

Demonstration Farms Are Proven Method To Introduce Conservation Practices

Extension demonstration farms, long the proven method best suited to introduce conservation practices into a community, have taken a new lease on life in 1943. In addition to the 162 demonstration farms planned in the past seven years, more than 50 new ones will be set up this year to act as method and result demonstrations proving the worth and value of conservation measures.

These demonstration farms are developed cooperatively between the farmer, the county agent, and the Soil Conservation Service Technicians. The program of widespread adoption of conservation practices, which is stressed this year as a part of the nations food production program, will be given added impetus through these farms which are demonstrating soil and moisture saving practices.

Extension demonstration farms are now proving the value of conservation farming in almost every county in the state. Pete Olson of Charles Mix county started by farming 137 acres on the contour in 1940. This year he has more than 500 acres farmed around the slope. Herman Viereck, Brule; L. B. McLaughlin, Minnehaha; George McManus, Lyman; and Carl Dietz, Todd; are a few of the ex-demonstration farm cooperators who are now supervisors of soil conservation districts. Many extension demonstration farm cooperators are now cooperators in districts.

Contour Corn Increases Yield 7 Bushels

"The district increased the value of that farm \$10.00 per acre by farming on the contour," is the opinion of John Kirk who helped pick corn on the Martin Arneson farm in Bon Homme county in 1942. The corn planted on the contour yielded an estimated increase of 7 bushels per acre while spring wheat and barley had an estimated increased yield of 3 and 4 bushels respectively.

Mr. Arneson is well-pleased with his contour farming and is very enthusiastic about his entire conservation program. On this 200-acre tract which he operates he has established gully control, grass seedling, grazing control, fall tillage, and contour strip cropping. All these conservation practices are part of a farm plan which has been developed with the aid of the soil conservation district.

Erwin Voegeli, Minnehaha county farmer, switched to contour farming a year ago after he watched his up-and-down hill planted corn washed out. He started to plant his corn in the conventional manner one evening. That night a heavy rain washed out most of the planting. He farmed 27 acres on the contour and noticed that it prevented run-off and erosion. This year he is planting an additional 112 acres on the level to prevent replanting and to increase production.

Contour Acreage Doubles In State

More than 100,000 acres of cropland, double the amount in 1942, will be farmed on the contour in South Dakota this year. This practice is being used in all the soil conservation districts which now cover part of all of 32 South Dakota counties.

Counties with 1000 or more acres of contour farming include Lyman, Brule, Buffalo, Union, Bon Homme, Minnehaha, Meade, Tripp, Pennington, Gregory, Fall River, Custer, Jackson, Codington, Day, Clay, Lawrence, and Lincoln. A considerable portion of the increased acreage this year is additional land on farms of district cooperators who have previously used this practice.

Garden To Receive Diverted Run-Off Water

Gerrit Van Noort of Near Fairview has assured that his garden will not fail this year because of lack of moisture. He has a diversion ditch to divert water from a gully so that water otherwise wasted will be put to work raising vegetables.

In rains, so far, the dike carried all the water away from the yards and building lot and spread it on the garden area. Previously this water rushed past the house and formed a gully through the yard.

During September last year the Lincoln district assisted in constructing this dike to stop the gully from forming near the house. This diversion ditch directs the water away from the buildings on a gradual slope and spreads it over a strip of hayland and then onto the garden.

Holds Moisture-Increases Production

"We received 90 bushels of corn from one contoured field and 80 bushels from another. This is about 20 bushels more than we ever received from either of those fields before," commented the Cox brothers, Union county farmers and co-operators with the Sioux-Brule district.

They credit half of this increased yield to favorable moisture conditions and the other half to contour farming which held that moisture on the field. These fields slope about 8 per cent, and, in their opinion, without contouring they would have lost half of the moisture and at least a ton of soil per acre.

Mr. Clifford Cox continued, "We are sure that increased yields will be noted in all row crops planted on the contour. We believe this method of farming has passed the experimental stage and we now have facts to substantiate our beliefs; after all the fields are laid out and the area of short rows seeded to brome grass, the cost of this modern method of farming will decrease."

A new bulletin telling the benefits of soil conservation districts is now being prepared by the Extension Service.

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Official Business

Ford Reports on Tree Planting

When the greatest war in the world's history does not dampen South Dakota farmers' interest in tree planting, it's a pretty strong indication that the long sought for "tree consciousness" in the minds of our people has arrived. That our people are still interested in planting trees despite war, turmoil, and unrest, is evidenced by the following facts.

Because of existing surpluses in tree and shrub planting stock in our nurseries this year, it was decided to offer PSFP shelter belt cooperators planting stock for replanting weak or failed spots in their belts, provided that cooperators would agree to do their own replanting. To our surprise 550 applied for this replanting stock and agreed to call for it at the time and place designated by the Service.

We figured that if 50% of the applicants called for the stock it would be about as good as we could expect under existing conditions.

We were surprised, fortunately on the

happy side, because better than 95% of the applicants called for their trees. All reports are not in yet, but indications are that between 250,000 and 300,000 trees were replanted by cooperators in shelter belts in South Dakota this year.

Would you expect such results in a war year? We didn't. That is why we think tree planting is here to stay.

* * *

Crested Boosts Early Milk Production

That crested wheatgrass brings dairy cows to full milk production a month or more earlier than native pastures, and can be pastured heavily during the early spring season, is the report of Ed Bohlander, farmer near Winner, South Dakota, and co-operator with the Winner-Dixon project.

"I kept 15 milk cows and a bull on an 8-acre crested wheatgrass pasture for two months last spring, giving the native pastures a good start," Bohlander said.

"There was plenty of feed and it was so good that the cows made an excellent milk production record."